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Public procurement for sustainable development

A framework for the public sector

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Summary

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- Public procurement constitutes the world’s largest single marketplace, having a value of some \$13 trillion per year, half of which is spent by countries of the Global South. In response to global emergencies such as climate breakdown and the COVID-19 pandemic, governments are embarking on a period of unparalleled demand for action and public expenditure. Robust principles of sustainability and development need to be at the heart of this. Many international organizations, business and think-tanks have called for ‘impact mitigation’ and ‘reduction of negative impacts’ in sustainable public procurement (SPP), but these ideas send the wrong message.
 - This paper proposes a revised definition of sustainable procurement. It reads: ‘Sustainable procurement is a process whereby organizations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a life-cycle basis while addressing equity principles for sustainable development, therefore benefiting societies and the environment across time and geographies.’ This concept shifts the narrative away from the pursuit of damage mitigation and towards the promotion of equities for sustainable development.
 - The paper encourages the observation of 10 standards for public procurement for sustainable development. *Economic facilities, social opportunities, protective security, political freedoms and transparency guarantees* are some of the ‘development blocks’ that can underpin a state strategy. *Intragenerational, intergenerational, interspecies, procedural and geographical equity* are some of the ‘sustainability pillars’ that can be mobilized in procurement policies and practices.
 - Papua New Guinea, Ecuador and Brazil have all developed strategies to provide *economic facilities* to selected industries, while also addressing some of the sustainability pillars: for example, adopting environmental standards and giving preference to smaller and local suppliers, women-owned businesses and peasant family farmers. Papua New Guinea’s Vision 2050 and Ecuador’s Buen Vivir plan have also addressed *social opportunities* and *intergenerational equity*, and Brazil’s Food Acquisition Programme has addressed *protective security* and *geographical equity*.
 - Sustainable procurement should be enshrined in legislation, with secondary legislation being regularly updated by (or in consultation with) a permanent taskforce. This taskforce should actively engage with diverse groups and businesses. SPP is an issue that is better dealt with by multidisciplinary teams that have expertise in development economics, design engineering, and environmental and social policy, for example.

- Harnessing purchasing power for sustainable development should be given serious consideration in policy integration strategies and in negotiations on trade, development, human security and the environment. Augmented and globalized health crises, recessions, environmental and climate breakdown – and their uneven and long-lasting consequences – make procurement for sustainable development essential to building more resilient, sustainable and just societies. Put simply, unless we as an international community reform public procurement, we will not meet sustainable development objectives.

01

Introduction

Sustainable public procurement has hitherto been narrowly defined, and often disconnected from countries' sustainability and development policies and strategies.

Public procurement influences markets, supply chains and society at large. Here is an example. The schools in your constituency need desks. Which kind of desks should be bought – or leased, or refurbished? Which kinds of suppliers are to be considered? These decisions influence who (which industries, which geographies, which populations, which generations) is to benefit from public procurement beyond its immediate utility. Deciding on refurbishing or upcycling instead of buying new desks would boost the service industry, which is in line with the most effective way of reducing the environmental footprint: reducing consumption. Choosing between wood, metal or plastic desks would feed into different supply chains. The choice made could benefit the forestry, mining or oil industries – each of which is challenged by particular technological, labour and environmental issues. Should the state procure from smaller enterprises or big companies? From a local social enterprise or a multinational business? From an ethnic minority-, black- or women-owned enterprise? Would it even matter? It would, if the state had a development plan and wanted to influence distribution of wealth and shared prosperity. Furthermore, who should be responsible for determining the correct destination for the desks, and the management of the end of their life? Post-consumption requirements are often neglected in public contracts, but these ultimately dictate if the process is part of a linear or a circular economy.¹

These considerations hold for small procurements as well as for 'mega-infrastructure' projects such as railways, ports, dams and bridges. According to recent estimates, the world's annual public procurement spend is about \$13 trillion, equivalent to one-sixth of global GDP.² Evidently, procurement can be used by the state for strategic purposes.

¹ See Schröder, P. (2020), *Promoting a Just Transition to an Inclusive Circular Economy*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/04/promoting-just-transition-inclusive-circular-economy>.

² Open Contracting Partnership (2020), *How governments spend: Opening up the value of global public procurement*, <https://www.open-contracting.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/OCP2020-Global-Public-Procurement-Spend.pdf>.

Since the 1990s at least, sustainable public procurement (SPP) has been promoted as a means to meet the needs of governmental bodies and to generate benefits, not only to those bodies, but also to society, the economy and the environment.³ The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promotes procurement practices that are sustainable in accordance with national policies and priorities, through its Target 12.7 on sustainable consumption and production. Target 12.7 is linked to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12: 'Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.'⁴ This has created an opportunity for national as well as subnational governments to (re)consider how to mobilize their procurement powers in line with their own visions, policies and priorities. While progress towards Target 12.7 has not been formally monitored, by 2020 the UN had counted only 24 countries as having reported regulatory and legal instruments for sustainable consumption and production – 14 in the Global South and 10 in the Global North.⁵ Notably, there is considerable room for further take-up in sustainable consumption and production policies, including SPP. In fact, there is little precision as to what is meant by SPP. This allows for flexibility and for adapting to national and subnational contexts, but it has also led to varying definitions and interpretations, as well as to white- and 'greenwashing'. Consequently, there is little clarity on how to effectively engage in public procurement for sustainable development.

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On a positive note, according to several studies,^{6,7,8} SPP has been validated as an effective lever to drive innovation and sometimes to reduce negative impacts on the environment. However, such studies often use simplified lenses created by or for the private sector, and they rarely focus on the Global South. Indeed, most of the documented progress portrays 'green' procurement in Europe and across the Global North,^{9,10} even if more than \$6 trillion is spent annually in

³ United Nations Environment Programme (2017), *2017 Global Review of Sustainable Public Procurement*, https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/20919/GlobalReview_Sust_Procurement.pdf.
⁴ Several organizations have encouraged progress in circular and sustainable public procurement, such as United Nations bodies, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, the FGV (Fundação Getúlio Vargas – Getúlio Vargas Foundation), Chatham House, McKinsey, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and network grassroots organizations such as La Via Campesina and the Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Network.
⁵ United Nations Statistics Division (2015), 'SDG Indicators', <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> (accessed 24 Sep. 2020). Indicator 12.1.1. POLICY_REGLEG – Regulatory and legal instruments (e.g. laws, standards, enforcement measures).
⁶ Guerzoni, M. and Raiteri, E. (2015), 'Demand-Side vs. Supply-Side Technology Policies: Hidden Treatment and New Empirical Evidence on the Policy Mix', *Research Policy*, 44(3): pp. 726–47, doi:10.1016/j.respol.2014.10.009.
⁷ Lundberg, S., Marklund, P.-O. and Strömbäck, E. (2016), 'Is Environmental Policy by Public Procurement Effective?', *Public Finance Review*, 44(4): pp. 478–99, doi:10.1177/1091142115588977.
⁸ Betiol, L. S., Uehara, T. H. K., Laloe, F. K., Appugliese, G. A., Adeodato, S., Ramos, L. and Neto, M. P. M. (2015), *Sustainable Procurement: The Power of Public and Private Consumption for an Inclusive Green Economy*, São Paulo: FGV Program for Public Administration and Citizenship, doi:10.13140/RG.2.1.2259.9767.
⁹ ICLEI (2020), 'Procura+ Case Studies', <https://procuraplus.org/case-studies> (accessed 5 May 2020).
¹⁰ Walker, H., Miemczyk, J., Johnsen, T. and Spencer, R. (2012), 'Sustainable Procurement: Past, Present and Future', *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management*, 18(4): pp. 201–6, doi:10.1016/j.pursup.2012.11.003.

public procurement by countries of the Global South.¹¹ Indeed, Global South countries demonstrate the largest share of public procurement relative to their GDP, with a median value of 13.4 per cent.¹² This share is currently lower in the Asia-Pacific region, and higher in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. For instance, public procurement accounts for as little as 3 per cent of GDP in the Philippines, for 8.8 per cent in Papua New Guinea, and for as much as 21.4 per cent in Ecuador and 30 per cent in Indonesia.¹³ Although the global public procurement spend is worth \$13 trillion per year, most of what is spent by states is not easily traced back to sustainability principles. However, there are instances where some sustainability principles are considered.

The SPP debate is traditionally framed within the concept of the triple bottom line (TBL), a business accounting framework. The TBL mantra of ‘people, planet and profit’ has limited the potential of sustainable procurement for the public sector. The concept of TBL is narrowly prescribed, and even John Elkington, who coined the term in the 1990s, now advocates its recall.¹⁴ Indeed, procurement practitioners have drawn attention to the fact that buying from smaller firms, locally, is an important aspect of sustainable procurement in the public sector.¹⁵ Ethics, culture, safety, diversity, inclusion, justice, human rights and the environment are additionally listed as important aspects of SPP.^{16,17,18,19} Furthermore, most studies overlook the question of who gets to say what SPP is or should be, and often present ‘green procurement’ or ‘circular procurement’ as a synonym for ‘sustainable procurement’. While there is some overlap between these concepts and SPP, they are not synonymous. Alongside issues of political will and conceptualizations, another key problem affecting the take-up of SPP is that most officials see procurement simply as a means of acquiring goods and services at the minimum price possible. Sustainability and development are often beyond their remit or their capacities. In brief, SPP has been narrowly defined and is often disconnected from state policies and strategies.

In line with the SDGs, SPP should be devised in a way that makes sense to state policies and strategies, and this paper makes the case as to why states should adopt a comprehensive definition of SPP. Therefore, the question remains: how can state strategies and sustainability be combined in public procurement? And what would be the key elements of a comprehensive – and simultaneously flexible – framework for procurement for sustainable development? Citizens are becoming aware of the

¹¹ Author’s calculation, based on the database compiled by Open Contracting Partnership (2016). Available at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1nzpOOioUFSKIMcdKbEpbJgOZzpMTZtAmY1yS0RgUyW0/edit#gid=730520857> (accessed 10 Oct. 2020).

¹² Ibid. The minimum is 0.12 per cent in Benin and the maximum is 35.7 per cent in Vietnam. The average for Global South countries is 12.3 per cent (SD 0.071).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Elkington, J. (2018), ‘25 Years Ago I Coined the Phrase “Triple Bottom Line”. Here’s Why It’s Time to Rethink It’, *Harvard Business Review*, 25 June 2018, <https://hbr.org/2018/06/25-years-ago-i-coined-the-phrase-triple-bottom-line-heres-why-im-giving-up-on-it> (accessed 16 Aug. 2020).

¹⁵ Brammer, S. and Walker, H. (2011), ‘Sustainable Procurement in the Public Sector: An International Comparative Study’, *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 31(4): pp. 452–76, doi:10.1108/01443571111119551.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Kleine, D. and Brightwell, M. D. G. (2015), ‘Repoliticising and Scaling-up Ethical Consumption: Lessons from Public Procurement for School Meals in Brazil’, *Geoforum*, 67: pp. 135–47, doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.08.016.

¹⁸ Bettioli et al. (2015), *Sustainable Procurement*.

¹⁹ Leal Filho, W., Azul, A. M., Brandli, L., Özuyar, P. G. and Wall, T. (eds) (2020), *Responsible Consumption and Production*, Cham: Springer.

harmful and potentially irreversible consequences of environmental health and economic crises, and of the unbalanced distribution of costs and benefits of global development. And in response to global emergencies – exemplified by climate breakdown, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated crises – governments are embarking on a period of unparalleled demand for action and public expenditure. Robust principles of sustainability and development need to be at the heart of public procurement reforms and connected to state strategies, or unsustainable patterns of consumption and production will continue to be reproduced.

This paper argues that policy responses have to shift swiftly from poverty alleviation and the mitigation of negative impacts towards more ambitious responses that are aligned with the SDGs, such as the eradication of poverty and the promotion of equity, justice, well-being and positive impacts that benefit nature and people. Notably, ‘people’ refers to the many, not the few, and policy choices should be made not only for the indulgence of current generations in privileged geographies, but also for the benefit of future generations across the entire world.

Towards a comprehensive concept and a flexible framework

Acknowledging that procurement systems should accommodate the needs, wants and sovereignty of states and peoples, this paper introduces a concept and a framework to help in the placing of state strategies and priorities as the foundation for improvements in public procurement systems. Drawing on principles of sustainability, equity and development, and on the views of practitioners, policymakers and experts in the field, the proposed framework for procurement for sustainable development is presented in order to support policy analysis and policy research. To illustrate the practical application of this framework, this paper explores recent – and inspiring – state strategies and public procurement reforms in Papua New Guinea, Ecuador and Brazil. This paper also makes a contribution to debates about the power of public procurement to shape a future of shared prosperity: one that is a lever to ‘building back (or forward) better’, ‘the great reset’, or simply put, pathways to sustainability.

The paper proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 introduces insights from supply chain management, development economics and geography, and presents a definition of SPP and a proposed framework for procurement for sustainable development. The argument is: a) that the discourse positing that public procurement should minimize harm should be replaced by more ambitious and positive framings; and b) that development instruments and equity principles for sustainable development can be key in contributing to the advancement of the SPP agenda in both the Global South and the Global North. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 explore processes of change in Papua New Guinea, with its vision to become a global leader in sustainable development; in Ecuador, with its Buen Vivir national plan; and in Brazil, with its Food Acquisition Programme, which was linked to the Zero Hunger strategy. In each case, the analysis starts with an examination of the state strategy or priority (a vision, a policy, a programme or a state project), that is the

foundation element of the framework. Practical recommendations are presented in Chapter 6 – drawing, *inter alia*, on consultations with policymakers and other experts. In conclusion, Chapter 7 emphasizes the need for a full appreciation of the diversity of development challenges and the complexity of sustainability in the study and practice of public procurement. This is critical if the trillions spent every year in public procurement are to be deployed in a way that best promotes better environmental stewardship, social equity and a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

02

Sustainable public procurement

Public procurement should respond to state strategies and development plans while delivering on a series of equity principles for sustainable development.

One of the most popular definitions of SPP gained shape in the 2000s, through an international UN taskforce, led by Switzerland under the Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production. It reads:

Sustainable Procurement is a process whereby organizations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organization, but also to society and the economy, **whilst minimizing damage to the environment.**²⁰

In 2017, the latest UN Environment Programme (UNEP) global review of SPP slightly amended this definition, to state that SPP should ‘significantly’ reduce negative impacts on the environment.²¹ The global network ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability has also acknowledged that the focus should shift from ‘minimizing damage to the environment’ to generating benefits not only to the organization, the economy and society, but also to the environment.²² However, the mainstream definition, as quoted above, has been widely adopted by several organizations, such as the UN Development Programme

²⁰ Swiss Confederation Federal Office for the Environment (2011), ‘Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Public Procurement Led by Switzerland: Activity Report May 2011’, p. 6, <https://sustainableprocurement.eu.com/documents/MTFonSPPReportCSD19FINAL.pdf>. Emphasis added.

²¹ United Nations Environment Programme (2017), *2017 Global Review of Sustainable Public Procurement*, p. 1.

²² ICLEI (2016), *The Procura+ Manual: A Guide to Implementing Sustainable Procurement*, European Sustainable Procurement Network, https://procuraplus.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Manual/Procuraplus_Manual_Third_Edition.pdf.

(UNDP),²³ the World Bank,²⁴ the International Organization for Standardization (ISO 20400:2017) and the European Commission.²⁵

The most common definition of SPP is largely based on a concept proposed in 2005 by a business-led commission established by the UK government, the Sustainable Procurement Task Force (SPTF), which ‘was set up under the direction of Sir Neville Simms, [former] Chairman of International Power Plc.²⁶ and a leading private sector proponent of sustainability’.²⁷ Instead of placing the environmental, social and environmental aspects on the same level of importance – as in the original TBL framework, which focused on economic prosperity, environmental quality and social justice²⁸ – when the UK taskforce released its report ‘Procuring the Future’ in 2006,²⁹ social and economic interests were placed above environmental quality. Thus the taskforce violated the principle of ‘strong sustainability’, which holds that good performance in development cannot substitute for ecological destruction.³⁰ This paper now proposes a revised definition, as follows:

Box 1. A revised definition of sustainable procurement

Sustainable procurement is a process whereby organizations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a life-cycle basis while addressing equity principles for sustainable development, therefore benefiting societies and the environment across time and geographies.

Public procurement should help governments deliver on state strategies (be it presented as a vision, a policy, a programme or a state project), which may be underpinned by ‘development blocks’ such as economic facilities, social opportunities, protective security, political freedoms or transparency guarantees. As such, depending on the state strategy, certain ‘sustainability pillars’ can be more salient than others, such as intragenerational, intergenerational, interspecies, procedural or geographical equity.

Source: Author’s own analysis, modified from United Nations Environment Programme (2017).

²³ United Nations Development Programme (2015), ‘UNDP Procurement Strategy 2015–2017’, <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/sweden/Procurement%20Strategy%20Final%20July%201%202015.pdf> (accessed 4 Oct. 2020).

²⁴ The World Bank (2019), ‘Sustainable Procurement: An introduction for practitioners to sustainable procurement in World Bank IPF projects’, <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/788731479395390605/Guidance-on-Sustainable-Procurement.pdf> (accessed 4 Oct. 2020).

²⁵ European Commission (2020), ‘Green and Sustainable Public Procurement’, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/versus_en.htm (accessed 4 Oct. 2020).

²⁶ Now Engie Energy International, a multinational electricity generation company.

²⁷ UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2006), ‘Procuring the Future: Sustainable Procurement National Action Plan: Recommendations from the Sustainable Procurement Task Force’, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procuring-the-future> (accessed 7 Aug. 2020).

²⁸ Elkington, J. and Rowlands, I. H. (1999), *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*, Oxford: Capstone.

²⁹ UK Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (2006), ‘Procuring the Future’.

³⁰ See Pearce, D. W. and Atkinson, G. D. (1993), ‘Capital Theory and the Measurement of Sustainable Development: An Indicator of “Weak” Sustainability’, *Ecological Economics*, 8(2): pp. 103–8, doi:10.1016/0921-8009(93)90039-9.

The assumption behind this definition is that states, through their procurement powers, would not try to achieve an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental objectives, but rather would try to promote a strong development pathway to sustainability – one that understands that the role of states, particularly during and following global health and environmental crises, has been shifting from promoting growth at all costs to promoting well-being and shared prosperity. For instance, ‘business as usual’ does not in such circumstances seem to be an option for the future, so ideas of ‘beyond growth’, ‘building forward better’, ‘the great reset’ and living in a ‘safe and just space for humanity’ – with social well-being as a foundation and environmental boundaries for human activities – have been gaining acceptance.^{31,32} This paper argues, then, for a swift change in how SPP is defined. Indeed, the current climate, health and environmental crises have given clear signals that conventional ways of framing sustainability (the current paradigm known as ‘weak sustainability’)³³ need to be altered. States must move from damage mitigation to damage prevention, and, more importantly, towards the promotion and creation of net benefits with regard to sustainable development.

Procurement for sustainable development: a framework

The framework for procurement for sustainable development proposed in this paper includes a state strategy, a set of potential development instruments, and a set of potential sustainability principles. To illustrate the articulation of these elements, Figure 1 depicts the framework using a building as metaphor – with foundation blocks, a platform and pillars. The **state strategy platform** entails a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. State priorities and strategies can be set out in the form of a vision, a policy, a programme or a state project. ‘Development blocks’ underlying the state strategy platform and ‘sustainability pillars’ are represented within dashed lines. Obviously, depending on the state strategy, certain development blocks and sustainability pillars can be more salient than others. Those represented in Figure 1 are drawn from Amartya Sen’s and Graham Haughton’s ideas of development and sustainability, which are recognized concepts that are a good fit with regard to challenges to society and the planet.

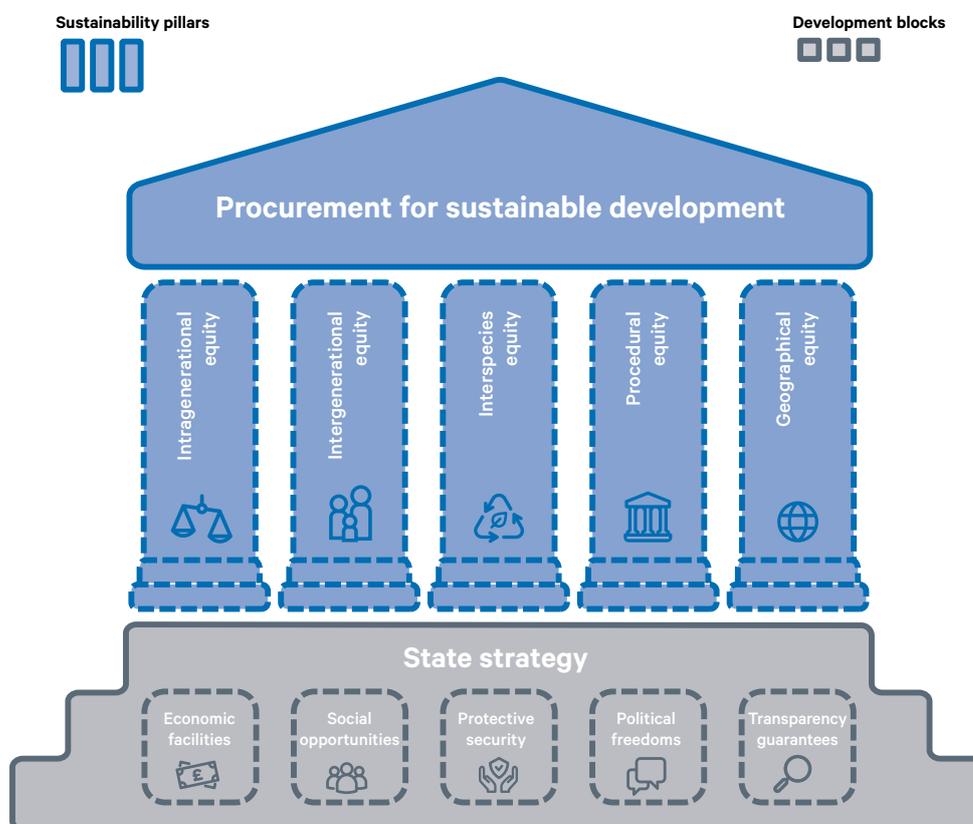
States must move from damage mitigation to damage prevention, and, more importantly, towards the promotion and creation of net benefits with regard to sustainable development.

³¹ Raworth, K. (2012), *A Safe and Just Space for Humanity: Can We Live Within the Doughnut?*, Oxford: Oxfam Discussion Papers, https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/dp-a-safe-and-just-space-for-humanity-130212-en_5.pdf.

³² Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2019), ‘Beyond Growth: Towards a New Economic Approach’, [https://www.oecd.org/naec/averting-systemic-collapse/SG-NAEC\(2019\)3_Beyond%20Growth.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/naec/averting-systemic-collapse/SG-NAEC(2019)3_Beyond%20Growth.pdf).

³³ See Pearce and Atkinson (1993), ‘Capital Theory and the Measurement of Sustainable Development’.

Figure 1. Procurement for sustainable development: a framework



Source: Author's own analysis.

Development blocks underpin the state strategy platform. The five suggested development blocks are: (1) *economic facilities*, (2) *social opportunities*, (3) *protective security*, (4) *political freedoms* and (5) *transparency guarantees*.³⁴ States will give different weight to each foundation block depending on their particular circumstances and priorities. For instance, some states might prioritize cohesion over participation or *political freedoms*, and horizontal accountability over *transparency guarantees*, whereby one state actor has the formal authority to demand explanations and impose penalties on another. Other states would rather focus on transparency for vertical accountability. Under such a framework, the disclosure of information is believed to empower citizens to hold public officials responsible for their spending and performance – ‘thereby reducing corruption and mismanagement of public resources and leading, eventually, to more accountable, responsive, and effective governance’.³⁵ Similarly, *economic facilities* can be one of the development blocks of a state strategy, but this is not mandatory, and would not necessarily appear alone. There is no minimum requirement here, but if a state is to mobilize its procurement powers for development, one or more of these blocks are likely to be found underpinning its strategy.

³⁴ Sen, A. (1999), *Development as Freedom*, New York: Oxford University Press.

³⁵ Kosack, S. and Fung, A. (2014), ‘Does Transparency Improve Governance?’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17(1): pp. 65–87, doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-032210-144356.

Sustainability pillars mediate the delivery of a state strategy or priority through a policy instrument – in this case, public procurement. The five suggested sustainability pillars are: (i) *intragenerational equity*, (ii) *intergenerational equity*, (iii) *interspecies equity*, (iv) *procedural equity*, and (v) *geographical equity* (defined in more detail below).³⁶ These equity principles for sustainable development are interlinked, and are recommended here because they address equity for sustainable development rather than damage mitigation. The suggested sustainability pillars do not include economic development or growth – which can be found in the development blocks – but comprise a series of ethical and equity principles that have a better fit with the public sector. The examples in the next chapters will illustrate how some of these principles have been mobilized in Papua New Guinea, Ecuador and Brazil, but the text below briefly illustrates these principles, starting with one of the most popular.

Environmental stewardship, or taking care of the environment, is one of the widely used objectives for SPP, being termed ‘green procurement’ – which directly addresses the *interspecies equity* pillar. Several criteria have proved useful in green procurement: the utilization of life-cycle analysis, including analysis of carbon footprint and life-cycle costing; circular economy principles with reduced packaging and waste, giving preference to products that are designed to last for an appropriate amount of time and to allow for easy disassembly, and avoiding single-use goods and those designed to not last, for example manufactures with built-in obsolescence; and the elimination of products containing harmful or hazardous substances, such as electronic products containing mercury and/or lead, or food containing residues of certain pesticides. The framework presented in this paper retains environmental stewardship as a pillar for SPP.

Among key issues arising within the *intragenerational* and *intergenerational* pillars of SPP is the need to ensure that suppliers generate jobs that pay at least a living wage (and that otherwise do not exploit adults or children, particularly not in ways that might constitute modern slavery); as well as ensuring that workers and communities around production sites (such as factories, farms, forests and mines) are safe; and that purchasing programmes proactively seek to procure supplies from enterprises owned by minority groups and women. For *intergenerational equity* – which conveys a concern with the future (or ‘futuraity’) – to work, consumption levels need to be reduced or limited today, particularly in the Global North,³⁷ so that future generations are more likely to have the opportunity to enjoy their lives and the natural world to the same – or even a greater – extent as do current generations. At the same time, Global South societies should avoid mimicking emulating lifestyles.³⁸ The concept of intergenerational equity also links to geographical equity.

The *geographical equity* pillar encourages the appreciation of the impacts of procurement not only within but also beyond borders – from neighbourhood level to global level. One group of people should not benefit or suffer disproportionately

³⁶ Houghton, G. (1999), ‘Environmental Justice and the Sustainable City’, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 18(3): pp. 233–43, doi:10.1177/0739456X9901800305.

³⁷ The extraction of primary materials for human consumption has been growing, having reached 86 billion tonnes in 2017. United Nations Statistics Division (2020), ‘Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns’, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/goal-12> (accessed 8 Aug. 2020).

³⁸ Hickel, J. (2017), *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and Its Solutions*, London: Penguin.

from the activities of another group.³⁹ This has to do with ethics, justice, inclusion and solidarity across borders, or ‘transfrontier responsibility’, and entails observing *intragenerational, intergenerational, interspecies and procedural equity*.⁴⁰ For instance, a government that allows for the sourcing of biofuel or timber for infrastructure projects with no verification of product origins and impacts might cause irreversible damage to the environment and undermine people’s livelihoods, in the present and in the future.^{41,42} On a positive note, observing *geographical equity* in public procurement can take the form of giving preference to suppliers in less affluent states and jurisdictions. Tackling *geographical equity* also entails solidarity and ethics in encouraging high standards of sustainability across borders.

The geographical equity pillar encourages the appreciation of the benefits of justice for all, and not only for one community, one state, one union or one federation.

In addition, the *geographical equity* pillar encourages the appreciation of the benefits of justice for all, and not only for one community, one state, one union or one federation. For too long, the exploitation of cheap labour and the over-exploitation of primary resources, along with a push for polluting industries to move to ‘other’ places, were promoted as a way to ‘advance’ and ‘develop’. This ‘business as usual’ way of pursuing development is both unfair and unsustainable.⁴³ In early 2020 the European Union (EU) launched its Green Deal, which promotes climate-friendly public procurement, but although its intentions are good, it barely scratches the surface of an overwhelming carbon and material footprint. For instance, the EU Green Deal encourages carbon accountability but virtually ignores transfrontier responsibility, as well as the fact that Europe consumes more than its fair share of the world’s ecological resources – indeed, 20 per cent of the earth’s biocapacity is used in the EU alone, even if it is home to only 7 per cent of the global population.⁴⁴ As Haughton puts it: ‘The economic growth or quality of life of one area, which is achieved by passing on resource and pollution costs to another, is no longer acceptable.’⁴⁵ This only shifts the problem abroad.

³⁹ Haughton, G. (1998), ‘Geographical Equity and Regional Resource Management: Water Management in Southern California’, *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 25(2): pp. 279–98, doi:10.1068/b250279.

⁴⁰ Haughton (1999), ‘Environmental Justice and the Sustainable City’.

⁴¹ Vilella, M., Betioli, L. S., Teixeira, M. A. C., Gomes, M. V. P., Uehara, T. H. K. and Neto, M. P. M. (2011), ‘Consumo Responsável de Madeira Amazônica: A Adoção Do Instrumento Da Licitação Sustentável Por Governos Subnacionais Membros Da Rede Amigos Da Amazônia’, *Cadernos Gestão Pública e Cidadania*, 16(58), pp. 106–25, doi:10.12660/cgpc.v16n58.3568.

⁴² Acheampong, M., Ertem, F. C., Kappler, B. and Neubauer, P. (2017), ‘In Pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Number 7: Will Biofuels Be Reliable?’, *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 75: pp. 927–37, doi:10.1016/j.rser.2016.11.074.

⁴³ United Nations (2012), *The Future We Want: Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*, Rio de Janeiro: Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

⁴⁴ World Wide Fund for Nature (2019), ‘Living Beyond Nature’s Limits’, https://www.footprintnetwork.org/content/uploads/2019/05/WWF_GFN_EU_Overshoot_Day_report.pdf.

⁴⁵ Haughton (1998), ‘Geographical Equity and Regional Resource Management’, p. 295.

This links in turn with the relevance of the *procedural equity* pillar, which calls for fairness in the way decisions are made, for some states, or for social cohesion alongside accountability, for other states. For instance, a procedurally equitable procurement process would allow and encourage individuals and organizations – potentially including informal groups, associations, not-for-profit organizations, cooperatives, and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises – to engage in public procurement, as well as to be invited and actively listened to in meetings in which the public sector looks for solutions in the form of new products or services.

The development blocks and sustainability pillars outlined above are by no means definitive or exhaustive, but they may help to focus on particular issues around state strategies that may demand and deserve attention. For example, Papua New Guinea, Ecuador and Brazil have been mobilizing some of these elements in their procurement systems, in line with their own state strategies. These are appraised briefly in the next three chapters, in a way that does not attempt to evaluate each state strategy in full, but which seeks instead to examine and illustrate how the concept and framework proposed in this paper can be useful as a benchmark for research and policy analysis.

03 Procuring for social opportunities in Papua New Guinea

As part of PNG's Vision 2050 strategy, public procurement will be used to provide economic facilities and social opportunities for PNG's citizens, sustainably.

Through its 'Vision 2050' long-term strategy, Papua New Guinea (PNG) aims to become a global leader in responsible and sustainable development.⁴⁶ PNG has a culturally diverse, young and growing population – mostly living in rural areas – and a dynamic informal market. Richly endowed with natural resources, PNG is a major exporter of tropical timber and minerals. Poverty is a chronic issue (with 37 per cent of the country's population living below the national poverty line), as are land-grabbing and a lack of recognition of people's sovereignty,⁴⁷ with only some 10 per cent of formal economic production being controlled by the country's citizens.^{48,49} To address some of these challenges, human development has been placed at the core of PNG's state strategy.

⁴⁶ Asian Development Bank (2018), 'What Are Papua New Guinea's Priority Development Goals? Deputy Prime Minister Abel Shares His Views', 9 November 2018, <https://www.adb.org/news/features/what-are-papua-new-guineas-priority-development-goals-deputy-prime-minister-abel> (accessed 19 Apr. 2020).

⁴⁷ Sovereignty, in this sense, would belong to the people, who in turn may delegate it to governments.

⁴⁸ The Oakland Institute (2018), 'The Great Timber Heist Continued: Tax Evasion and Illegal Logging in Papua New Guinea', https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/great_timber_heist_cont.pdf.

⁴⁹ Hickel (2017), *The Divide*.

State strategy: Vision 2050

As set out in its Vision 2050 document, PNG aims to:

...[be] ranked in the top 50 countries in the United Nations Human Development Index by 2050, creating opportunities for personal and national advancement through economic growth, smart innovative ideas, [and] quality service and ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of benefits in a safe and secure environment for all citizens.⁵⁰

In line with this vision, two recent reforms have given public procurement strategic purpose: the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Policy 2016 and the National Procurement Act 2018. The SME Policy aims to support job creation, reduce poverty, and promote economic growth outside the resources sector, with a more equitable distribution of wealth through majority citizen ownership of business activities.⁵¹ The aim is to increase citizen control over the formal economy from 10 per cent to 70 per cent by 2030.^{52,53} One of the key mechanisms of this policy is to facilitate local content in government procurement for SMEs, as well as to provide tax relief and incentives for indigenous-owned companies.⁵⁴ Closely associated with this, the National Procurement Act stipulates margins of preference for local content and reserves certain tenders for PNG nationals, giving local companies exclusive rights to bid for state contracts valued at under 10 million kina (\$3.0 million).⁵⁵ Contracts valued at between 10 million and 30 million kina (\$3.0 million–\$8.9 million) are required to have at least 50 per cent national content, while contracts with a value greater than 30 million kina (\$8.9 million) can be awarded to all companies and persons. In addition, bids by national companies or citizens are afforded a margin of preference ranging from 4 per cent to 15 per cent. Promoting and maximizing ‘the participation of local communities and organizations’ is one of the sustainability principles formally included in PNG’s National Procurement Act, alongside with the utilization of ‘local expertise and materials’, and ‘application of appropriate, sustainable and cost-effective technologies’.⁵⁶ These principles are meant to be applied to all procurement ‘as far as is reasonably practicable’, which on the one hand may conceal non-compliance, but which on the other hand can also be used as a flexible guidance to be intelligently used according to current (and future) state strategies and availability of new solutions.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ National Strategic Plan Taskforce (2011), ‘Papua New Guinea Vision 2050’, https://www.treasury.gov.pg/html/publications/files/pub_files/2011/2011.png.vision.2050.pdf.

⁵¹ Hoare, A. (ed.) (2020), ‘Chatham House Forest Policy Assessment: Papua New Guinea’, <https://forestgovernance.chathamhouse.org/media/data-download/Forest-Policy-Assessment-PNG.pdf>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2016), ‘Overview and Commentary on the PNG Government’s SME Policy’, <https://www.pwc.com/pg/en/publications/sme-bulletin/sme-bulletin-png-sme-policy-commentary.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Using an average annual exchange rate in 2019 of K1:US\$0.29551, UNCTAD estimate, <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableView/tableView.aspx?ReportId=117> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

⁵⁶ National Parliament of Papua New Guinea (2018), National Procurement Act 2018, Section 48.2, <http://www.parliament.gov.pg/uploads/acts/18A-12.pdf> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

⁵⁷ This flexibility is also seen in Brazil’s and India’s public procurement systems, in which sustainability criteria are not always enforced. Since most states have limited clarity and capacity on sustainability, a flexible approach might work better for the moment, until their human capital is levelled up – for example, through training and education.

National forestry is one of the sectors that PNG wants to develop in a way that benefits all citizens. One third of PNG's land is currently under foreign control through logging concessions and business leases, with most companies not paying profit taxes or royalties to landowners.^{58,59} Moreover, there is little investment associated with adding value and downstream processing.⁶⁰ Roundwood logs and roughly treated wood comprise the vast majority of the country's forest sector exports, at some 3 million tonnes and a value of \$827 million in 2018.⁶¹ The new PNG state strategy encourages local processing, bans exports of roundwood logs, and slightly increases export taxes on all commodities – including products exported in a raw or semi-processed form.^{62,63} Also, to encourage the local timber industry, sawmilling, timber yards and retailing are activities under a Reserved Activity List – requiring 100 per cent PNG ownership – and prefabricated buildings, furniture-making, logging and downstream processing require a minimum of 51 per cent PNG ownership.^{64,65} Forest protection and sustainability are also listed in PNG's state strategy.

The new PNG state strategy encourages local processing, bans exports of roundwood logs, and slightly increases export taxes on all commodities.

Development and sustainability

PNG's Vision 2050 focuses on improving its ranking within UNDP's Human Development Index, which entails dimensions of health, education and living standards. The means of delivery are based on two of the 'development blocks' suggested in this paper's proposed framework, i.e. *economic facilities* (through the encouragement of a national industry and the development of business opportunities for SMEs and indigenous-owned businesses) and *social opportunities* (through improvements in education and health). In terms of the forestry sector, PNG's state strategy tackles several 'sustainability pillars', at least to a degree: these include the *intragenerational*, *intergenerational* and *interspecies equity* aspects, as well as *procedural* and *geographical equity*. Figure 2 highlights the elements identified in this brief appraisal of Vision 2050. The actual means of implementation, enforcement capacity, specific sustainability criteria (for example, for forest protection and sustainability) and the overall results of this national strategy are yet to be seen.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch (2020), 'Papua New Guinea: Events of 2019', <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/papua-new-guinea> (accessed 13 Aug. 2020).

⁵⁹ Hickel (2017), *The Divide*.

⁶⁰ National Strategic Plan Taskforce (2011), 'Papua New Guinea Vision 2050'.

⁶¹ Chatham House via resourcetrade.earth (undated), <https://resourcetrade.earth> (accessed 5 May 2020).

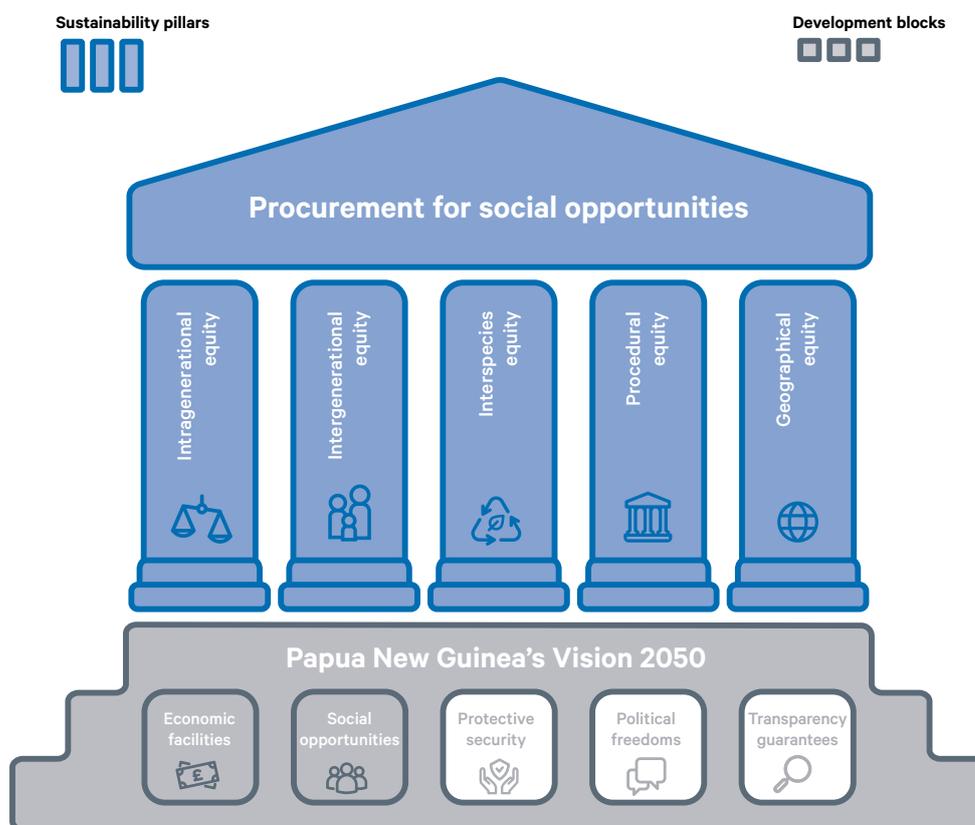
⁶² The Oakland Institute (2018), 'The Great Timber Heist Continued'.

⁶³ World Trade Organization (2019), 'Trade Policy Review: Papua New Guinea', https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/s387_e.pdf.

⁶⁴ Hoare (2020), 'Chatham House Forest Policy Assessment: Papua New Guinea'.

⁶⁵ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2016), 'Overview and Commentary on the PNG Government's SME Policy'.

Figure 2. Procurement for sustainable development in PNG's Vision 2050 strategy



Source: Author's own analysis.

PNG wants to become known for its success in human development by 2050, and to move away from an economy of overexploitation and cheap exports of primary unprocessed resources, such as roundwood logs. To some extent, PNG's strategy mimics historical measures taken by Britain – particularly after the 18th century – and by the US after the American War of Independence, in their respective periods of economic consolidation.⁶⁶ Now, however, PNG may find it challenging to negotiate this position with international institutions and with its regional neighbours. Challenges may also be encountered regarding internal difficulties for policy implementation, limited capacity in sustainability, and corruption in both public and private sector organizations. The planned infrastructure expansion is also a challenge for sustainable development in PNG.⁶⁷ As shown in Figure 2, some of the potential 'development blocks' are less evident in the current state vision, at least after the necessarily brief appraisal presented in this paper. But overall, PNG proposes a bold strategy that challenges the established economic structure, and by doing so, it is positioning public procurement as a strategic tool to leverage sustainable development, in line with the country's own national vision.

⁶⁶ Hickel (2017), *The Divide*.

⁶⁷ Alamgir, M., Sloan, S., Campbell, M. J., Engert, J., Kiele, R., Porolak, G. et al. (2019), 'Infrastructure Expansion Challenges Sustainable Development in Papua New Guinea', *PLoS ONE*, 14(7): e0219408, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0219408.

04 Procuring for 'Living Well' in Ecuador

Aligned with its Buen Vivir plan, Ecuador is making efforts to guarantee current and future well-being through its procurement system, including through the introduction of green procurement standards and the strengthening of the solidarity economy.

State visions centred on sustainability and the well-being of communities rather than (or as well as) economic growth have been on the rise, for instance, in Scotland, Iceland, New Zealand and India, and in Latin America.^{68,69} Ecuador's case is one of the first of its kind. In line with its 2008 constitution, Ecuador's Buen Vivir (Living Well) plan, also called *sumak kawsay*, emphasizes values such as community well-being, reciprocity, solidarity and harmony with *Pachamama*, or Mother Earth.⁷⁰ Ecuador has performed relatively well in terms of the ecological efficiency of its human development; according to a number of indices, well-being in Ecuador is ranked higher than in Italy, for example, where gross national income per head is at least three times as high.^{71,72}

⁶⁸ Wellbeing Economy Alliance (2020), 'Posts: Feasta & EHFF Podcast: Towards Wellbeing', <https://wellbeingeconomy.org/tag/wego> (accessed 24 Apr. 2020).

⁶⁹ Kothari, A., Demaria, F. and Acosta, A. (2014), 'Buen Vivir, Degrowth and Ecological Swaraj: Alternatives to Sustainable Development and the Green Economy', *Development*, 57: pp. 362–75, doi:10.1057/dev.2015.24.

⁷⁰ Williford, B. (2018), 'Buen Vivir as Policy: Challenging Neoliberalism or Consolidating State Power in Ecuador', *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 24(1): pp. 96–122, doi:10.5195/jwsr.2018.629.

⁷¹ New Economics Foundation (2020), 'Ecuador', <http://happyplanetindex.org/countries/ecuador> (accessed 13 Aug. 2020).

⁷² Sustainable Development Index (2020), 'Sustainable Development Index', <https://www.sustainabledevelopmentindex.org> (accessed 13 Aug. 2020).

State strategy: ‘Living Well’

Ecuador’s Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir promises an ‘inclusive and equitable development based on the fundamental tenet that no one can live well if others live badly’.⁷³ The innovation in this strategy lies in the acknowledgment that a livelihood cannot be sustainable when it harms other livelihoods – an aspect that has been overlooked in prevalent sustainable development frameworks.⁷⁴ More importantly, Buen Vivir is not a minor or sectoral project, but the core development plan for Ecuador, currently organized in three development objectives: 1) Rights for all throughout life – with equal opportunities for all, including nature and diversity; 2) Economy at the service of society, focused on solidarity, redistribution, food sovereignty and rural development; and 3) More society, better state – with transparency, participation and accountability.⁷⁵ Within this strategy, breaking inequalities and building cities that are inclusive (particularly towards people with disabilities) have been the main focus of Ecuador’s work regarding the SDGs,⁷⁶ with public procurement having a strategic role. Public procurement is intended to contribute to economic localization, rural development and food sovereignty,⁷⁷ and has to meet criteria relating to efficiency, transparency, quality, and environmental and social responsibility, according to the country’s legal framework.

National products and services must be prioritized in Ecuador’s public procurement, in particular those supplied by micro, small and medium-sized productive units, as well as by the ‘popular and solidarity economy’. The popular and solidarity economy in Ecuador is a form of economic organization whereby members organize and develop processes of production, exchange, commercialization, financing and consumption of goods and services, to satisfy needs and generate income – based on relationships of solidarity, cooperation and reciprocity, privileging work and the human being as the subject and purpose of their activity, oriented to living well, in harmony with nature, over appropriation, profit and capital accumulation.⁷⁸ The popular and solidarity economy includes associations, cooperatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/charities, communities and women’s self-help groups.⁷⁹ Along with preferential access to public procurement, Ecuador’s strategy also grants the popular and solidarity

⁷³ Horn, P. and Grugel, J. (2018), ‘The SDGs in Middle-Income Countries: Setting or Serving Domestic Development Agendas? Evidence from Ecuador’, *World Development*, 109: pp. 73–84, doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.04.005.

⁷⁴ Uehara, T. H. K. (2020, forthcoming), ‘Peasants, markets and austerity: State retrenchment and rural livelihoods in Amazonas and São Paulo in the aftermath of constitutional austerity (Brazil post-2015)’, PhD thesis, London: Imperial College London.

⁷⁵ República del Ecuador (2017), *Plan Nacional Para El Buen Vivir 2017-2021*, <https://www.gobiernoelectronico.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2017/09/Plan-Nacional-para-el-Buen-Vivir-2017-2021.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Horn and Grugel (2018), ‘The SDGs in Middle-Income Countries’.

⁷⁷ It is true that Ecuador’s public procurement norms could explicitly internalize instructions on social and environmental criteria: see Jara Vasques, J. and Puerta Martínez, Y. (2018), ‘La contratación pública es ambientalmente sustentable en Ecuador’, *Revista digital de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación*, 5: pp. 1251–63. However, Ecuador’s constitution is understood to suffice to provide legal security for sustainable procurement – see Casier, L., Huizenga, R., Perera, O., Ruete, M. and Turley, L. (2015), *Implementing Sustainable Public Procurement in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development, <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/iisd-handbook-ingp-en.pdf> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

⁷⁸ República del Ecuador (2011), *Ley orgánica de economía popular y solidaria*, <https://www.seps.gob.ec/documents/20181/25522/LEY%20ORGANICA%20DE%20ECONOMIA%20POPULAR%20Y%20SOLIDARIA%20actualizada%20noviembre%202018.pdf/66b23eef-8b87-4e3a-b0ba-194c2017e69a> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

⁷⁹ Superintendencia de Economía Popular y Solidaria (2019), ‘Formas de Organización de La Economía Popular y Solidaria – SEPS’, <https://www.seps.gob.ec/interna?formas-de-organizacion-de-la-economia-popular-y-solidaria> (accessed 4 May 2020).

economy preferential access to financing and training,⁸⁰ which has already showed progress: between 2010 and 2017, contracts awarded to organizations of the popular and solidarity economy increased sixfold, from \$48 million to \$282 million.⁸¹ For example, in the early 2010s the government sourced school uniforms made with fabrics of national origin by artisanal and microbusinesses and SMEs, and distributed them free of charge to 200,000 students.⁸²

Ecuador's state strategy explicitly acknowledges the rights of nature (*los derechos de la naturaleza*), as enshrined in the country's constitution, and encourages a competitive forestry sector through ecosystem restoration, the sustainable management of native forests, and the procurement of legal timber and legal forest products. Starting from 2020, public bodies are mandated to guarantee the legality of all wood products sourced by the public sector – which includes not only the central and autonomous governments, but also entities entitled to receive and administer public funds.⁸³ In early 2020 the government established the Green Point Bureau (*Mesa Punto Verde*), a dialogue platform bringing together the public and private sectors, and trade unions, for the promotion and strengthening of environmental incentives to advance 'green' procurement.⁸⁴ Companies wishing to supply government bodies will have to comply with environmental standards and seek accreditation from the Ministry of the Environment and Water.⁸⁵ The greening of public procurement in Ecuador is starting with a limited range of products, including furniture, car plates, tyres and footwear. The idea is to progressively expand the portfolio of 'greener' purchases.

Public procurement can play a pivotal role in Ecuador's unprecedented social pact in favour of equity actions towards peasants, indigenous populations and family farming – with their diversity of production systems – as well as localized and shorter supply chains supportive of stronger livelihoods. Of course, public procurement is not the only instrument for bringing such change. Ecuador's strategy also encompasses a series of complementary policies related to the provision of credits, insurance, social security and infrastructure for these groups.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ República del Ecuador (2017), *Plan Nacional Para El Buen Vivir 2017–2021*.

⁸¹ Servicio Nacional de Contratación Pública (undated), 'La compra pública apunta al desarrollo de la Economía Popular y Solidaria', <https://portal.compraspublicas.gob.ec/sercop/la-compra-publica-apuntala-el-desarrollo-de-la-economia-popular-y-solidaria>.

⁸² Servicio Nacional de Contratación Pública, Ministerio del Ambiente and United Nations Environment Programme (2016), *Compras Públicas Sostenibles Ecuador*, https://compranews.files.wordpress.com/2016/08/taller_compras_publicas_sostenibles_ecu_08_2016.pdf (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

⁸³ Servicio Nacional de Contratación Pública (2020), 'Oficio Nro. SERCOP-SERCOP-2020-0073-OF', <https://portal.compraspublicas.gob.ec/sercop/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/SERCOP-SERCOP-2020-0073-OF.pdf> (accessed 13 Aug. 2020).

⁸⁴ República del Ecuador, Ministerio del Ambiente y Agua (2020), 'Ecuador presentó la Mesa Punto Verde para el Desarrollo Sostenible con la suscripción de un convenio con el sector privado', <https://www.ambiente.gob.ec/ecuador-presento-la-mesa-punto-verde-para-el-desarrollo-sostenible-con-la-suscripcion-de-un-convenio-con-el-sector-privado> (accessed 13 Aug. 2020).

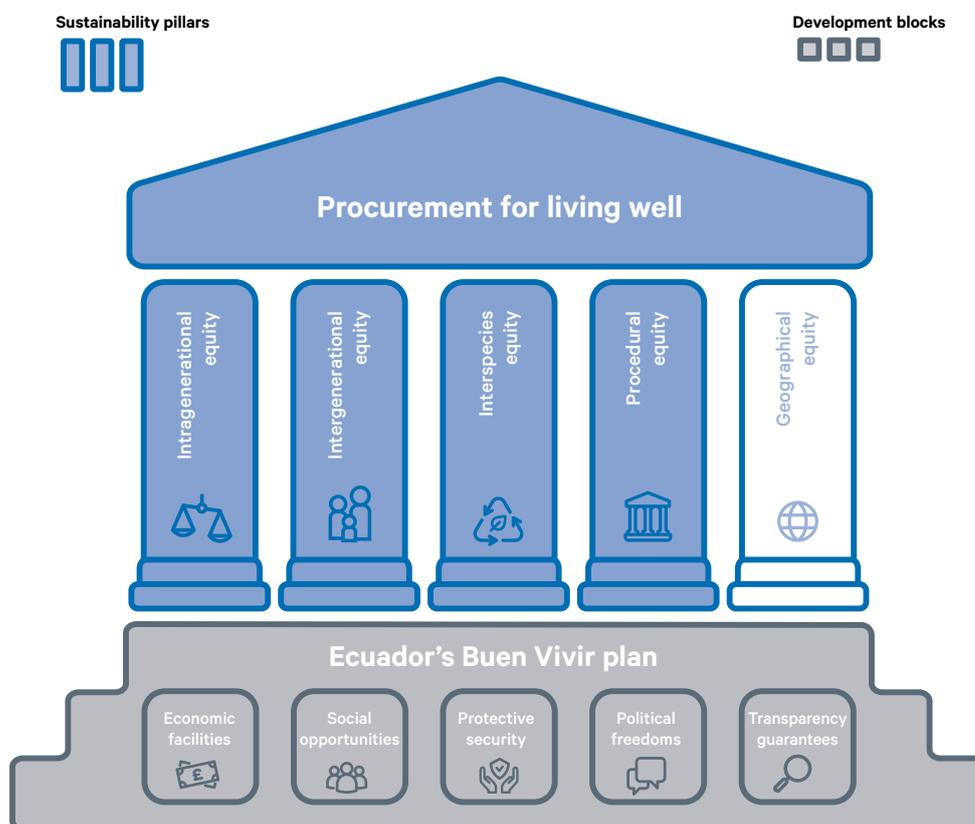
⁸⁵ El Telégrafo (2020), 'Proveedores del Estado deberán cumplir con criterios ambientales', 12 February 2020, <https://www.eltelegrafo.com.ec/noticias/sociedad/6/proveedores-estado-criterios-ambientales> (accessed 13 Aug. 2020).

⁸⁶ República del Ecuador (2017), *Plan Nacional Para El Buen Vivir 2017–2021*.

Development and sustainability

Underpinning Ecuador’s state strategy, it is possible to identify all five ‘development blocks’ and four of the five ‘sustainability pillars’ referenced in Figure 1. For instance, Ecuador’s procurement policy is wired as an *economic facility* for the popular and solidarity economy, which has effectively expanded the local economy and helped to reduce crime, poverty, health and economic inequality.^{87,88} Poverty and inequality remain high, however. Another challenge is Ecuador’s reliance on exports of oil, which has contributed to the climate crisis. There is indeed a contentious trade-off between oil drilling, subsidies, the conservation of rainforests and the rights of indigenous people.^{89,90} This is currently the subject of a number of legal battles and blame-avoidance behaviours.^{91,92}

Figure 3. Procurement for sustainable development in Ecuador’s Buen Vivir plan



Source: Author’s own analysis.

⁸⁷ New Economics Foundation (2020), ‘Ecuador’.

⁸⁸ Granda, M. L. and Jimenez, W. G. (2019), ‘The Evolution of Socioeconomic Health Inequalities in Ecuador during a Public Health System Reform (2006–2014)’, *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 18, 31: pp. 1–12, doi:10.1186/s12939-018-0905-y.

⁸⁹ Kothari, Demaria and Acosta (2014), ‘Buen Vivir, Degrowth and Ecological Swaraj’.

⁹⁰ Horn, P. (2018), ‘Indigenous Peoples, the City and Inclusive Urban Development Policies in Latin America: Lessons from Bolivia and Ecuador’, *Development Policy Review*, 36(4), pp. 483–501, doi:10.1111/dpr.12234.

⁹¹ Long, G. (2019), ‘Ecuador’s indigenous people under threat from oil drilling’, *Financial Times*, 5 December 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/8e1acf14-e467-11e9-b8e0-026e07cbe5b4> (accessed 13 Aug. 2020).

⁹² International Institute for Sustainable Development (2019), ‘How reforming fossil fuel subsidies can go wrong: A lesson from Ecuador’, <https://www.iisd.org/articles/lesson-ecuador-fossil-fuel-subsidies> (accessed 14 Aug. 2020).

Ecuador's Buen Vivir plan tries to break with established models of development that have not worked for culturally diverse and resource-rich countries.^{93,94} Generally, procurement policy in the Global South has chiefly focused on socio-economic aspects of sustainability. Ecuador is no different from its regional neighbours in this regard. Its procurement system was based on measures to provide *economic facilities* for the popular and solidarity economy, mainly through *procedural equity* instruments and with aspects of *intragenerational equity* to promote social justice and of *intergenerational equity* to allow younger and future generations to have a decent life. The rights of nature, as embedded in Ecuador's constitution, have recently started to be integrated into Ecuador's public procurement strategy, which is illustrated in the *interspecies equity* pillar. The outcomes of Ecuador's 'green' procurement are yet to be seen. Indeed, one of the main challenges for the country has been to harmonize its national 'living well' agenda with international finance and trade regimes, which are often at odds. For instance, commentators have pointed to challenges related to social unrest linked to the oil, mining and agro-industries,⁹⁵ and indigenous peoples have claimed that they are not being duly consulted regarding exploitation of their ancestral lands.⁹⁶ But Ecuador has been trying to use its state purchasing power as a lever for its Buen Vivir plan, and for an expanding set of equity principles for sustainable development.

⁹³ Beling, A. E., Cubillo-Guevara, A. P., Vanhulst, J. and Hidalgo-Capitán, A. L. (2020), 'Buen Vivir (Good Living): Glocal Genealogy of a Latin-American Utopia for the World', *Latin American Perspectives*, doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.30420.14723.

⁹⁴ Escobar, A. (2006), 'Difference and Conflict in the Struggle Over Natural Resources: A political ecology framework', *Development*, 49: pp. 6–13, doi:10.1057/palgrave.development.1100267.

⁹⁵ Paz Cardona, A. J. (2020), 'For Ecuador, a litany of environmental challenges awaits in 2020', Mongabay, 5 February 2020, <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/02/for-ecuador-a-litany-of-environmental-challenges-awaits-in-2020> (accessed 2 Oct. 2020).

⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch (2020), 'Ecuador: Events of 2019', <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ecuador> (accessed 2 Oct. 2020).

05

Procuring for 'Zero Hunger' in Brazil

Brazil's Food Acquisition Programme has shown that procurement power can be mobilized to deliver on state strategy while also addressing equity principles for sustainable development.

Rather than examining an overarching state strategy, as in the cases of PNG and Ecuador, this chapter briefly appraises a sectoral programme to demonstrate the versatility of the proposed framework.

Zero Hunger (Fome Zero), was a key state strategy that helped Brazil reduce its poverty gap by half in the 2000s,⁹⁷ as well as the prevalence in the country of undernourishment, which fell from 10.6 per cent in 2001 to below 2.5 per cent from 2009.⁹⁸ In the international arena, Brazil's Fome Zero gained traction after the UN adopted and multiplied the idea to create a global Zero Hunger challenge, which was eventually embedded in the missions of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP), as well as in the SDGs.⁹⁹ Alongside the conditional cash-transfer programme Bolsa Família,

⁹⁷ From 19.5 per cent in 2001 to under 10 per cent since 2011, at \$5.50/day in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms; or from 4.56 per cent in 2001 to under 2 per cent since 2011, at \$1.90/day in PPP terms. See The World Bank (2020), 'PovcalNet', <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/povOnDemand.aspx> (accessed 26 Aug. 2020).

⁹⁸ The World Bank (2020), 'Prevalence of undernourishment – Brazil', <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SN.ITK.DEFC.ZS?locations=BR> (accessed 26 Aug. 2020).

⁹⁹ Milhorance, C., Bursztyn, M. and Sabourin, E. (2019), 'The Politics of the Internationalisation of Brazil's "Zero Hunger" Instruments', *Food Security*, 11: pp. 447–60, doi:10.1007/s12571-019-00898-y.

the Food Acquisition Programme, a public procurement programme, became a global benchmark for the developing world.^{100,101,102}

State strategy: the role of the Food Acquisition Programme

Through the Food Acquisition Programme, the Brazilian government has procured food from smallholder family farmers, mostly peasants, to contribute to localized food security initiatives. The innovation in the procurement process is in relieving family farmers from heavy bureaucratic procedures that impeded their access to public procurement markets. This is a procedural change that has proved effective in giving family farmers access to a market mediated by the state. In this sense, the Food Acquisition Programme in Brazil resembles PNG's strategy of buying from SMEs, but in Brazil's case, the beneficiaries are the rural poor who are not necessarily organized into enterprises – as in the Ecuadorian strategy. The Food Acquisition Programme was deemed successful in reducing poverty and improving nutrition and food security.¹⁰³ It had a successful trajectory from its inception in 2003 up to 2012, when Brazil entered a period of fiscal austerity. However, the programme's legacy remains, particularly in changes made to the way school meals are now sourced across the country. Since 2009, at least 30 per cent of the central budget for school meals is mandated to be spent on food purchases sourced directly from local smallholder family farmers.¹⁰⁴ In the period from 2009 to 2018, the Food Acquisition Programme purchased R\$12 billion¹⁰⁵ worth of food from family farmers across the country. The central budget for school meals is around R\$4 billion a year, reaching more than 40 million students.¹⁰⁶

Development and sustainability

The Food Acquisition Programme has tried to change the situation of peasants and the urban poor in a two-sided programme. On the supply side, the programme supports the development of a market exclusive to family farmers – which is decentralized, with shorter supply chains. Local economies are strengthened

¹⁰⁰ Swenson, L. F. J. and Klug, I. Implementation of decentralized food procurement programmes and the impact of the policy, institutional and legal enabling environment: the case of PRONAE and PAA Africa in Mozambique, Working Paper number 161, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7793e.pdf> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁰¹ De Schutter, O. (2014), *The Power of Procurement: Public Purchasing in the Service of Realizing the Right to Food*, Briefing Note 08, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/otherdocuments/20140514_procurement_en.pdf.

¹⁰² Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (2015), *The State of Food and Agriculture 2015*, Rome: FAO.

¹⁰³ Sambuichi, R. H. R., Kaminsk, R., Perin, G., de Moura, I. F., Januário, E. S., Mendonça, D. B. and de Almeida, A. F. C. (2019), *Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos e Segurança Alimentar: Modelo Lógico, Resultados e Desafios de Uma Política Pública Voltada ao Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar*, Texto Para Discussão, Brasília: Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada.

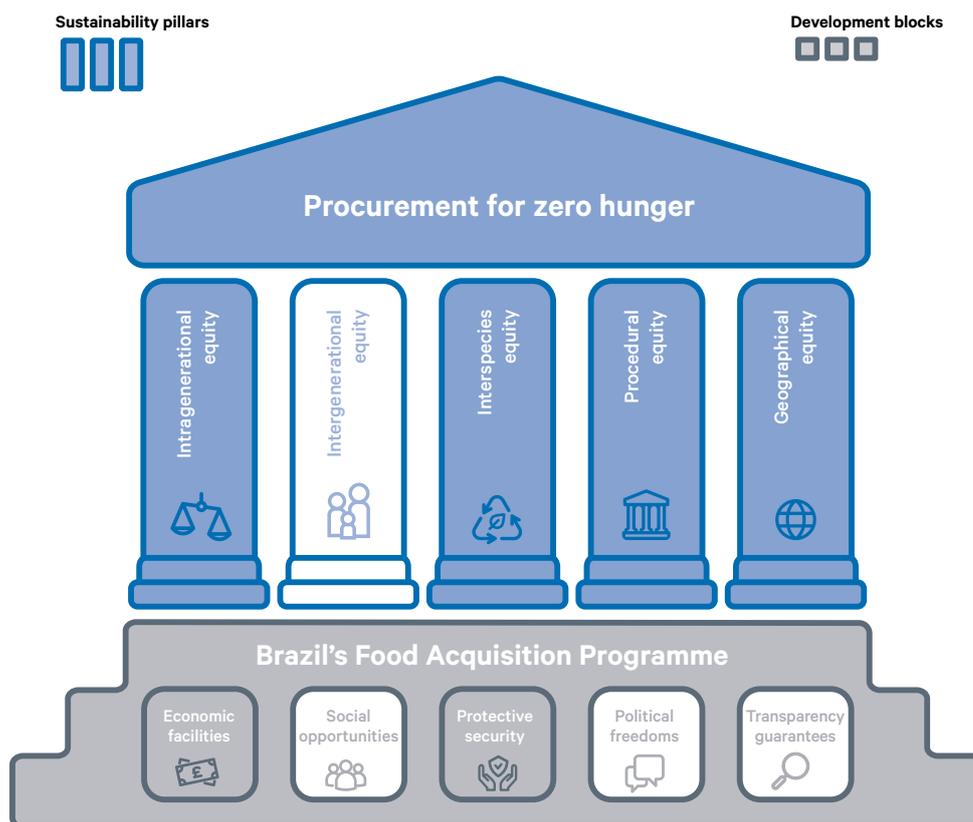
¹⁰⁴ de Oliveira Machado, P. M. et al. (2018), 'Purchase of Products Directly from Family Farms for the National School Feeding Program (PNAE): Cross-Sectional Study with the Universe of Brazilian Municipalities', *Ciência e Saúde Coletiva*, 23(12): pp. 4153–64, doi:10.1590/1413-812320182311.28012016.

¹⁰⁵ \$3 billion. Values adjusted to December 2018 (National Consumer Price Index – INPC-IBGE).

¹⁰⁶ Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies (2020), *O Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (PNAE) e a Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional na Crise da Covid-19: PL 786A/2020 e Propostas do Congresso Nacional*, Nota Técnica 231, São Paulo: DIEESE, <https://www.dieese.org.br/notatecnica/2020/notaTec231Pnae.pdf> (accessed 9 Nov. 2020).

and producers receive fairer payments.¹⁰⁷ On the demand side, the programme increases the food security of vulnerable populations, who would normally struggle to afford nutritional meals. As illustrated in Figure 4, the Food Acquisition Programme is based on at least two ‘development blocks’, providing 1) *economic facilities* to peasants and other smallholder family farmers, through the improvement of the conditions of exchange; and 2) *protective security* to food-insecure populations, in the form of a social safety net that helps prevent starvation. The programme has improved opportunities for peasants to remain in (or even return to) the countryside, should they wish to, instead of living on the outskirts of urban centres (in *favelas* or informal settlements) and being pushed into providing cheap labour (for example, in sweatshops or the construction sector).¹⁰⁸ By so doing, the programme demonstrates a number of the ‘sustainability pillars’ in the proposed framework for procurement for sustainable development.

Figure 4. Procurement for sustainable development in Brazil’s ‘Zero Hunger’ programme



Source: Author’s own analysis.

¹⁰⁷ Schneider, S., Salvate, N. and Cassol, A. (2016), ‘Nested Markets, Food Networks, and New Pathways for Rural Development in Brazil’, *Agriculture*, 6(4): p. 61, doi:10.3390/agriculture6040061.

¹⁰⁸ Uehara (2020, forthcoming), ‘Peasants and the state in Brazil’.

Under the Food Acquisition Programme, smallholder family farmers are compensated either directly or through their cooperatives or not-for-profit associations. More importantly, the compensation is aligned with regional market prices, which means that farmers are paid a fairer price for their produce, which can be 10 times higher than the price they would obtain from middlemen, retailers or the food industry. Not only that: the programme gives preference to women farmers and to income-poorer families, especially in municipalities that face higher levels of food insecurity,¹⁰⁹ thus addressing *intragenerational equity* in terms of gender and improving income distribution across shorter supply chains, while contributing to food security.

The example of the Food Acquisition Programme provides clear evidence that procurement powers can be mobilized to reduce hunger – and to deliver on state strategic programmes – at the same time as addressing equity principles for sustainable development.

Through its emphasis on decentralization, the programme has encouraged food production everywhere in the country, which has helped to build greater levels of resilience across communities and regions – a feature that addresses *geographical equity*. In addition, the programme’s budget has been prioritized in order to serve the most vulnerable regions of the country and those municipalities where greater levels of social vulnerability persist – for example, in the Northeast region.¹¹⁰ The *interspecies equity* pillar is also present to a certain extent, at least in the context of the higher levels of biodiversity that are generally found in the farms supplying the programme.¹¹¹ According to legislation,¹¹² the programme should also be encouraging agroecological and organic production, but these are still incipient developments.^{113,114}

Brazil’s Food Acquisition Programme has been retrenched since 2013, following political changes that have reduced citizen participation in policymaking and led to constitutional austerity.¹¹⁵ The prevalence of undernourishment in the population remained below 2.5 per cent in 2017–19, according to the 2020 WFP World Hunger Map,¹¹⁶ but the civil society organization FBSSAN (Fórum Brasileiro de Soberania e Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional) has predicted that hunger

¹⁰⁹ Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento (CONAB) (2020), *Critérios para Pontuação dos Projetos de Compra com Doação Simultânea 2020*, Brasília: Brasil, https://www.conab.gov.br/images/arquivos/agricultura_familiar/Criterios_PAA2020.pdf.

¹¹⁰ CONAB (2019), ‘Execução do PAA’, <https://www.conab.gov.br/agricultura-familiar/execucao-do-paa>.

¹¹¹ Wittman, H. and Blesh, J. (2017), ‘Food Sovereignty and *Fome Zero*: Connecting Public Food Procurement Programmes to Sustainable Rural Development in Brazil’, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 17(1): pp. 81–105, doi:10.1111/joac.12131.

¹¹² Decreto (Presidential Decree) No. 7.745 of 4 July 2012.

¹¹³ CONAB (2019), ‘Execução do PAA’.

¹¹⁴ Uehara (2020, forthcoming), ‘Peasants, markets and austerity’.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ United Nations World Food Programme (2020), ‘Hunger Map 2020’, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/hunger-map-2020> (accessed 26 Aug. 2020).

could be on the rise again in Brazil.¹¹⁷ Brazil is a well-known agricultural powerhouse,¹¹⁸ where the state has struggled to balance the needs of its population – in particular, those of the most vulnerable groups – and the interests of the national elites partnered with global food empires and the increasingly financialized agribusiness sector.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, the example of the Food Acquisition Programme provides clear evidence that procurement power can be mobilized to reduce hunger – and to deliver on state strategic programmes – at the same time as addressing equity principles for sustainable development.

117 Fórum Brasileiro de Soberania e Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional (2019), Carta convocatória, Rio de Janeiro: FBSSAN. <https://fbssan.org.br/2019/07/carta-convocatoria> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

118 Stabile, M. C. C. et al. (2020), 'Solving Brazil's Land Use Puzzle: Increasing Production and Slowing Amazon Deforestation', *Land Use Policy*, 91: 104362, doi:10.1016/j.landusepol.2019.104362 (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

119 Ioris, A. A. R. (2018), *Agribusiness and the Neoliberal Food System in Brazil: Frontiers and Fissures of Agro-Neoliberalism* (London and New York: Routledge).

06

Practical guidance

Policymaking for SPP should begin with an examination of state strategies and procurement systems through development and sustainability lenses, and should draw on practical lessons learned in comparable contexts.

This chapter addresses some of the most common barriers to the planning and implementation of SPP, which are linked to institutional and economic viability, and to knowledge and human capital.^{120,121,122} These are divided into three broad topics: entry points; regulation; and professionalization. The recommendations are based on the literature, the author's own experience, and discussions at a workshop on public procurement hosted by Chatham House on 18 June 2020. A list of participants in the workshop is included towards the end of this paper: see About the author and contributors.

Entry points

Public procurement, as a lever for sustainable development, can be shaped through several entry points. A strategy of procurement for sustainable development can arise from a particular jurisdictional issue, which could be regional, national or subnational in its coverage.¹²³ As seen, a state strategy or priority can develop in a number of different forms – such as PNG's Vision 2050, Ecuador's Buen Vivir, and Brazil's Food Acquisition Programme. Alternatively, there are multiple international frameworks and institutions offering 'hooks' for SPP, which can be coordinated with state strategies.

¹²⁰ Delmonico, D., Jabbour, C. J. C., Pereira, S. C. F., de Sousa Jabbour, A. B. L., Renwick, D. W. S. and Thomé, A. M. T. (2018), 'Unveiling Barriers to Sustainable Public Procurement in Emerging Economies: Evidence from a Leading Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative in Latin America', *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 134: pp. 70–79, doi:10.1016/j.resconrec.2018.02.033.

¹²¹ Brammer and Walker (2011), 'Sustainable Procurement in the Public Sector'.

¹²² Ramos, L. and Uehara, T. H. K. (2012), 'Cuidado com as Compras', *Página 22*: p. 48.

¹²³ Looking at jurisdictional level can happen at subnational, national and regional levels, with an example of the latter being regional common markets such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), as suggested by Tim Stoffel. Stoffel, T. (2020), 'Socially responsible public procurement (SRPP) in multi-level regulatory frameworks', Discussion Paper 9/2020, Bonn: German Development Institute/Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE).

Importing experiences, or inventing a SPP strategy from scratch – without taking the state’s own priorities into account – is likely to have limited take-up. To illustrate this point, in recent experiences in Colombia and Vietnam local stakeholders were suspicious about adopting European SPP standards but were keen to learn from experiences from the Global South. Having then worked with local consultants in regional networks, Colombia decided to focus on public procurement of sustainable coffee, which was nationally relevant; and Vietnam on procuring legal timber, in line with a national interest in supporting the wood furniture industry.^{124,125} Guillermo Navarro, from FAO’s Subregional Office for Mesoamerica, which is based in Panama, agrees with the importance of linking development models with public procurement. ‘If the government has a clear business [or development] model, then a public procurement instrument is easier to implement because it would be an integrated demand component built in the model.’ For other countries, fighting corruption might be a priority, such as was the case for several states in Latin America,¹²⁶ such as Brazil, where public procurement reforms in the 1990s have initially addressed *transparency guarantees* and *procedural equity* – progressing more recently to tackling other development and equity principles for sustainability.

Alternative entry points are presented by international instruments and institutions, such as the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; climate, biodiversity, land use and desertification agreements; and well-being commitments or human rights instruments, such as the UN Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, on the Rights of the Child, and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Opportunities for states to rethink their consumption and production systems are also presented by international trade negotiations, such as those leading to the conclusion of Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreements between the EU and tropical countries.¹²⁷ In addition, several policy agendas present opportunities for procurement for sustainable development: these include ‘the reset economy’, ‘regenerative economy’, ‘circular economy’, ‘just transitions’, ‘pathways to sustainability’, ‘resilient societies’, ‘green growth’, ‘green economies’, etc. In Uganda, for instance, the idea of using SPP for ‘green growth’, as proposed by UNEP, gained traction after local stakeholders realized it could help in generating jobs, particularly for women and younger people, and in stimulating innovation at the local level.¹²⁸ This is an example of how states can coordinate the interests of international organizations based on their own priorities.

¹²⁴ Remarks made by F. Yaker, United Nations Environment Programme, and M. Norman, Forest Trends Association, at workshop on public procurement hosted by Chatham House, 18 June 2020.

¹²⁵ To, P. X. (2020), ‘Efforts to exclude illegal timber from public purchasing: Unfolding developments of a public procurement policy in Vietnam’, *Forest Trends*, 18 June 2020, <https://www.forest-trends.org/blog/efforts-to-exclude-illegal-timber-from-public-purchasing-unfolding-developments-of-a-public-procurement-policy-in-vietnam> (accessed 14 Aug. 2020).

¹²⁶ Remarks made by G. Navarro-Monge, FAO Subregional Office for Mesoamerica, at workshop on public procurement hosted by Chatham House, 18 June 2020.

¹²⁷ Hoare, A., Young, D., Uehara, T. H. K., Seidu, M. K., Birikorang, G., Wete Soh, L. and Kamga Kamga, J. (2020), *Forest sector accountability in Cameroon and Ghana: Exploring the impact of transparency and participation*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, p. 6, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/10/forest-sector-accountability-cameroon-and-ghana>.

¹²⁸ Remarks made by K. Ernest, United Nations Environment Programme, at workshop on public procurement hosted by Chatham House, 18 June 2020.

Trying to build as comprehensive an SPP strategy as possible – observing multiple development and sustainability goals as suggested in the framework proposed in this paper (Figure 1) – seems to be a good starting point. However, while a comprehensive approach is a good objective in itself, most experiences demonstrate a phased implementation. Several states have opted to begin the process of building an SPP strategy by focusing on a few types of products and a few ‘sustainability pillars’, before progressing to encompass other organizations, sectors and principles of equity for sustainable development. The case of Ecuador illustrates this point well. Ecuador began by incorporating the popular and solidarity economy into its public procurement system, and has tried more recently to introduce environmental criteria for a few categories of products. The state of São Paulo in Brazil followed a similar pathway, having started with the procurement of legal timber before then developing diverse environmental criteria for all types of goods and services purchased by the state.^{129,130}

The revised concept of SPP offered in this paper, alongside the proposed framework for procurement for sustainable development, may benefit policy analysts, policymakers, international organizations and regional customs unions as they seek to appraise current strategies and to reform public procurement systems to deliver on sustainable development objectives. In doing so, such actors (particularly those engaged in high-income states in the Global North) will encounter at least three aspects that are particularly challenging, yet crucial to the task. First, to get to grips with *geographical equity* in solidarity with former colonies and those regions and states struggling to develop under the current trade regime. Second, to establish *intergenerational equity*, being mindful and addressing the needs of older, younger and future generations. Third, to contribute to the reduction of consumption levels per head. Consumerism and the uneven accumulation of wealth are at odds with the development and sustainability principles presented in this paper.

Regulation and institutionalization

The effectiveness of procurement for sustainable development is more likely to follow from mandatory and binding regulations rather than voluntary or soft, legally non-binding regulations.^{131,132,133} Therefore, this paper recommends enshrining the relevant ‘sustainability pillars’ in binding regulations. Primary legislation (such as statutes, acts and laws) should enshrine general principles, rather than specific solutions and technologies. For instance, primary legislation could encompass macro-level ‘development blocks’ and sustainability pillars,

¹²⁹ ICLEI (2016), *The Procura + Manual*.

¹³⁰ Uehara, T. H. K., Villela, M., Bettioli, L. S., Prado, O., Gomes, M. V. and Reis, C. P. (2011), *Poder Público e Consumo de Madeira: Desafios e Alternativas Para a Gestão Responsável da Madeira Amazônica* (São Paulo: Programa Gestão Pública e Cidadania, FGV).

¹³¹ Remarks made by F. Yaker, United Nations Environment Programme, and M. Hidson, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, at workshop on public procurement hosted by Chatham House, 18 June 2020.

¹³² Koutalakis, C., Buzogany, A. and Börzel, T. A. (2010), ‘When Soft Regulation Is Not Enough: The Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive of the European Union’, *Regulation and Governance*, 4(3): pp. 329–44, doi:10.1111/j.1748-5991.2010.01084.x.

¹³³ Kasa, S., Westskog, H. and Rose, L. E. (2018), ‘Municipalities as Frontrunners in Mitigation of Climate Change: Does Soft Regulation Make a Difference?’, *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 28(2): pp. 98–113, doi:10.1002/eet.1791.

but leave the details to be set out in secondary or subordinate legislation (decrees and ordinances), which can be more easily amended and updated. Also, an SPP policy could apply to public procurement across government bodies, in national and subnational governments, as well as in state-owned and state-controlled companies and organizations that receive public funds, if appropriate. Solutions and technologies will constantly change, but sustainability principles – such as those suggested, in the proposed framework for procurement for sustainable development – are conceptually robust and likely to remain relevant in the longer term.

Solutions and technologies will constantly change, but sustainability principles are conceptually robust and likely to remain relevant in the longer term.

As described in previous chapters, PNG enshrined some of the sustainability pillars in its National Procurement Act of 2018. Brazil modified its legislation in 2010 to include ‘the promotion of a sustainable national development’ as one of the objectives of public procurement.¹³⁴ Brazil opted for a generic form of ‘sustainable development’ in its procurement law, leaving the details to be addressed in secondary legislation, while PNG’s National Procurement Act is more specific, with a focus on the localization of the economy and on the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of solutions. There is no single best solution for a binding regulation, but this paper encourages policymakers and policy analysts to appreciate definitions of sustainability that are relevant to the public sector, such as the revised definition of SPP given in Box 1.

Public bodies can use procurement as a lever for sustainable development. However, making the case for procurement for sustainable development is unlikely to succeed in the absence of state commitment to the provision of development opportunities (such as those illustrated as blocks of the proposed procurement framework) or to equity principles for sustainability (such as those represented in the framework as pillars). While it is true that anecdotal and punctual action have led to initial moves towards SPP across the world, particularly at subnational level, political support is required for scaling it up.^{135,136,137,138}

Professionalism in a permanent taskforce

Sustainable development is a complex matter, as is public procurement. Procurement for sustainable development is more likely to succeed when a multi-sectoral and multi-professional taskforce or council is made permanent, and when it effectively harnesses collective expertise to drive innovation in public procurement

¹³⁴ República Federativa do Brasil (2010), Lei No. 12349, 15 December 2010, Art. 1, http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2010/lei/12349.htm (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹³⁵ Betiol et al. (2015), *Sustainable Procurement*.

¹³⁶ ICLEI (2016), *The Procura+ Manual*.

¹³⁷ United Nations Environment Programme (2017), *2017 Global Review of Sustainable Public Procurement*.

¹³⁸ Da Costa, B. B. F. and Da Motta, A. L. T. S (2018), ‘Key factors hindering sustainable procurement in the Brazilian public sector: A Delphi study’, *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning*, 14(2): pp. 152–71, doi:10.2495/sdp-v14-n2-152-171.

matters. Indeed, experts from research institutes, NGOs and the private sector, including actors from trade unions, minority groups and the solidarity economy, could well contribute to this taskforce, which can have advisory and regulatory powers. For example, a taskforce on procurement for sustainable development could advise departments and ministries, as well as heads of state or government, and/or regulate technical requirements.

Procurement is unlikely to contribute to sustainable development if the procurement process is broadly dismissive of the challenges of marginalized groups and is conducted by highly specialized units with limited understanding of the interlinkages and complexity of sustainability and development. Sustainable development is not a sub-discipline of ecology or economics, but an issue that is better studied by multidisciplinary teams with expertise in development economics, design engineering, and environmental and social policy, for example.

High-level convening and facilitation are crucial in this process, which should attempt to keep political and technical decisions separate. In particular, the leadership of a taskforce for procurement for sustainable development should not be granted, in full, to a representative of a for-profit organization or a business-sponsored foundation – rather, it should remain under the auspices of the government and/or of a legitimate and independent organization. This can help shape a more balanced policy or strategy for procurement for sustainable development (or SPP) – one that has societal rather than profit-seeking interests at heart. Open dialogue can help in the creation of ambitious but feasible tendering requirements, which would also avoid failed bids. The work of such a taskforce or council could start with an appraisal of current development strategies and associated procurement systems, as suggested in this paper.

Developing capacity is also fundamental, since knowledge in sustainability and development is scarce. For instance, Brazil's National School of Public Administration has offered training in sustainable procurement since 2015. This has been key to expanding capacity across organizations in the country, and has also encouraged subnational governments to take action. For more practical advice and additional resources, please refer to the appendix to this paper, which includes a list of online resources, training and other materials such as guidelines and manuals for the implementation of SPP, as well as opportunities for experience sharing.

07

Procuring for sustainable development

An appreciation of complexity in the study and practice of procurement for sustainable development needs to be at the heart of recovery plans, new deals and development strategies.

Solving the puzzle

Returning to the matter of procuring desks for an office or for hundreds of thousands of students, and the questions that are commonly posed in such a scenario (which kind of desks should be bought, leased, or refurbished, and which kinds of suppliers are to be considered), the answer this paper provides may sound disappointing, since in both cases it is: ‘it depends’. If encouraging the local forestry industry is part of the state strategy, it would make sense to procure desks made of wood. Likewise, if encouraging the oil industry is strategic, purchasing plastic – or plastic lumber – desks would make more sense. Of course, there are several alternatives, but these two options will suffice for illustration purposes. Several states have been supporting oil industries,¹³⁹ which is linked to a sevenfold growth in plastics production between 1976 and 2015.¹⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the production of industrial roundwood, which received less support from producer states, grew by 1.3 times. Not surprisingly, with such high levels of indirect subsidies, plastics have displaced materials such as wood. However,

¹³⁹ Alongside Iran, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, countries such as India, Indonesia, Egypt, Algeria, Argentina, Ecuador and Malaysia have provided considerably high subsidies for fossil fuels as a proportion of their GDP. See IEA (2020), ‘Energy subsidies: Tracking the impact of fossil-fuel subsidies’, <https://www.iea.org/topics/energy-subsidies> (accessed 11 Aug. 2020).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

both industries have been associated with detrimental impacts on jobs, land, climate and livelihoods.^{141,142,143} Although plastic is recyclable, only around 9 per cent of it has been recycled to date; most of it accumulates in landfill or in the natural environment – for example, in the world’s oceans.¹⁴⁴ Besides, recycling capacity is not widely available. Wood, although more easily biodegraded than plastics (if not contaminated by synthetic bindings), can be linked to deforestation, biodiversity loss, social conflicts and poor labour standards – when sourced and processed without care.¹⁴⁵ The low price of plastics and illegal timber fail to reflect their costs in terms of environmental damage and well-being.^{146,147} Any procurement decision, therefore, has wide-ranging ramifications.

The task of procuring desks would ideally respond to a state strategy. If a state wishes to develop its forestry capacity and create jobs for locals, as is the case in Papua New Guinea, public procurement can contribute to generate *social opportunities* for carpenters and manufacturing workshops, for example. If a state plans to diversify its economy beyond oil extraction while focusing on the well-being of its people, as in Ecuador, one way to handle it could be a combined approach that considers recycling infrastructure, with the public procurement process taking responsibility for pre- and post-consumption, and the strengthening of a bioeconomy alongside its popular and solidarity economy. As seen, a process for procuring desks can be based on state strategies, and could entail the provision of *social opportunities* and *economic facilities*, among other instruments for development, as illustrated in the ‘development blocks’ of the proposed framework for procurement for sustainable development (Figure 1). With regard to sustainability aspects, there would also be several dimensions to be observed, as illustrated in the ‘sustainability pillars’ of Figure 1. In this hypothetical case, buying desks could take environmental considerations into account (regarding the origin of materials; impacts on land use; pollution; material and carbon footprints, etc.), as well as *intergenerational* aspects (regarding the renewability of resources and the consequences of excess consumption of plastics or wood products), and *intragenerational* aspects (when the supplier is asked to guarantee payment of living wages across the supply chain, for example). There are multiple alternatives, such as procuring desks made of wood from legal and well-managed forests linked to community forestry and small-scale production,¹⁴⁸ or using reclaimed wood, as well as modular materials that could be easily disassembled and cycled

¹⁴¹ Bull, G. Q., Bazett, M., Schwab, O., Nilsson, S., White, A. and Maginnis, S. (2006), ‘Industrial forest plantation subsidies: Impacts and implications’, *Forest Policy and Economics*, 9(1): pp. 13–31.

¹⁴² Meyfroidt, P. and Lambin, E. F. (2011), ‘Global Forest Transition: Prospects for an End to Deforestation’, *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 36: pp. 343–71, doi:10.1146/annurev-environ-090710-143732.

¹⁴³ Malkamäki, A., D’Amato, D., Hogarth, N. J., Kanninen, M., Pirard, R., Toppinen, A. and Zhou, W. (2018), ‘A Systematic Review of the Socio-Economic Impacts of Large-Scale Tree Plantations, Worldwide’, *Global Environmental Change*, 53: pp. 90–103, doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.09.001.

¹⁴⁴ Geyer, R., Jambeck, J. R. and Law, K. L. (2017), ‘Production, Use, and Fate of All Plastics Ever Made’, *Science Advances*, 3(7): pp. 25–29, doi:10.1126/sciadv.1700782.

¹⁴⁵ Hoare, A. (2015), *Tackling Illegal Logging and the Related Trade: What Progress and Where Next?*, Chatham House Report, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2015/07/tackling-illegal-logging-and-related-trade-what-progress-and-where-next>.

¹⁴⁶ Deere Birkbeck, C. (2020), ‘Here’s how the WTO can help address plastic pollution’, World Economic Forum, 9 January 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/wto-address-plastic-pollution> (accessed 11 Aug. 2020).

¹⁴⁷ Nurrochmat, D. R., Dharmawan, A. H., Obidzinski, K., Dermawan, A. and Erbaugh, J. T. (2016), ‘Contesting National and International Forest Regimes: Case of Timber Legality Certification for Community Forests in Central Java, Indonesia’, *Forest Policy and Economics*, 68: pp. 54–64, doi: 10.1016/j.forpol.2014.09.008.

¹⁴⁸ Bull et al. (2006), ‘Industrial forest plantation subsidies’.

back to the industrial or natural system. While it could be said that one specific solution is universally superior to another, it could also be claimed that the best solution depends on time, place and scale. For instance, the local circumstances, the relevant state strategies, and the stage of advancement in technology and infrastructure may determine what is best in each case.¹⁴⁹ However, in any such case, the framework proposed in this paper may help in the process of decision-making, in policy appraisals and concept workshops, or as a reference for new manifestos, pledges and policies.

Conclusions

The concept of SPP introduced in this paper is intended to be high-level, serving as a reference for policy analysis, appraisals and evaluations. The accompanying framework can be useful as a benchmark for procurement for sustainable development. The set of potential development blocks and sustainability pillars is particularly useful as a means of bringing complexity back to SPP. The framework for procurement for sustainable development includes the classic tripod (comprising environmental, social and economic pillars), but goes beyond those principles to include other dimensions that have been often overlooked in procurement policy and scholarship: these include *geographical equity* and *intergenerational equity*, and some instruments for development, such as cohesion and horizontal accountability, or *political freedoms* and *transparency guarantees*, to use the language of Amartya Sen. Besides, the development blocks and sustainability pillars of the framework can also serve as points of reference for other policy instruments, such as fiscal policy and trade policy.

Most international organizations, businesses and think-tanks have called for ‘impact mitigation’ and ‘reduction of negative impacts’ in SPP, but these ideas send the wrong message.

Most international organizations, businesses and think-tanks have called for ‘impact mitigation’ and ‘reduction of negative impacts’ in SPP, but these ideas send the wrong message. By implying that sustainable procurement in the public sector has to contribute to the expansion of the economy while mitigating damage to society and the environment, they reinforce the imbalance that lies at the heart of the problem – and that arises from unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. Until now, procurement that tries to balance economic, social and environmental benefits has largely perpetuated the problem. Having identified that mainstream concepts of SPP derived from a corporate framework of the 1990s, this paper has argued for a new concept of SPP (see Box 1). The revised definition fits the requirements of the public sector and engages with solid principles of sustainability and development. This paper has also introduced

¹⁴⁹ Tools such as life-cycle assessments can be helpful in obtaining an estimation of the actual implications of different options, as can constantly updated criteria, such as the Green Public Procurement criteria developed by the European Commission for use by EU member states.

a proposed framework for procurement for sustainable development, and has used examples from Papua New Guinea, Ecuador and Brazil to demonstrate how states can leverage public procurement to the advantage of their own development priorities, and how sustainability principles can be interwoven with it. Sectoral programmes in Uganda, Vietnam, Colombia and São Paulo have also been drawn on as examples of how national and subnational governments in the Global South have been tackling SPP, and have made it clear that SPP is not exclusive to Global North countries.

Harnessing state powers (including purchasing powers) for sustainable development should be at the heart of negotiations and commitments to ‘building forward better’, or to any kind of new deal.¹⁵⁰ A plethora of expected recovery and incentive packages are being developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and several post-2020 reviews of global frameworks on sustainable development, international aid, global health and well-being, business and trade, land, biodiversity and climate are in progress. All of these could benefit from a thoughtful appreciation of the diversity of development challenges and the complexity of sustainability. States should relinquish sustainability models designed by and for businesses, and should observe principles that are appropriate for the public interest – for the welfare or well-being of the general public and society, and for the health of people and the planet. But until international commitments and frameworks have been decided upon, sovereign states and institutions willing to take the lead on sustainable development can find immediate inspiration in the proposed framework for procurement for sustainable development, as well as in the guidance offered in Chapter 6.

In times of global crises and rising uncertainties, policymakers and citizens alike have come to realize the need for new policy ideas, new strategies and reinvented states to lead societies towards greater resiliency, fairness and, ultimately, sustainability. Governments are embarking on a period of unparalleled government expenditure. Procurement for sustainable development, as presented in this paper, needs to be at the heart of this process, or the world will lose a critically important opportunity – one that is, perhaps, the opportunity of a generation.

¹⁵⁰ Businesses are also rethinking their purposes, with recent commitments positing all stakeholders central stage, thinking about long-term value creation. Small and large companies alike have been volunteering for B Corp (Benefit Corporation) certification, boosting the B Corp movement. See, for instance, Marquis, C. (2020), *Better Business: How the B Corp Movement is Remaking Capitalism*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Appendix: Additional resources

UNEP's *Sustainable Public Procurement Implementation Guidelines*, available in French, Spanish, Russian and English,¹⁵¹ is one of the key references for greening economies, and it has been adapted for use by some states, such as Mongolia.¹⁵² ICLEI's *Procura + Manual*¹⁵³ focuses on the European market, but regional versions have been customized – for instance for Brazil.¹⁵⁴ Brazil also benefits from a guide by the Fundação Getulio Vargas (Getulio Vargas Foundation – FGV), the handbook *Compra sustentável*,¹⁵⁵ which is available in Portuguese and English,¹⁵⁶ and a constantly updated governmental guide, the *Guia Nacional*.¹⁵⁷ The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) has been working on SPP across the Global South, including in Latin America and the Caribbean. For the latter, the IISD's report, *Implementando compras públicas estratégicas en América Latina y el Caribe*,¹⁵⁸ in Spanish, introduces a framework for reform in public procurement. In 2020 the Economist Intelligence Unit published an essay entitled 'The future of public spending',¹⁵⁹ which makes reference to the SDGs and recommends tools and practices. Most of the available references are framed within a narrow concept of sustainability, tailor-made by and for the private sector, but they provide implementation guidelines that are rather useful.

Beside these frameworks, new experiences are constantly logged, in multiple languages, at the One Planet network, which is an open multi-stakeholder platform focused on the implementation of SDG 12. The One Planet SPP programme¹⁶⁰ features stories in multiple languages. Interested parties can join the network for free, and gain knowledge of new resources, such as ICLEI's Procura+ Africa Sustainable Procurement Network.¹⁶¹

¹⁵¹ United Nations Environment Programme (2012), *Sustainable Public Procurement Implementation Guidelines*, Paris: United Nations Environment Programme, <http://bit.ly/UnepSPPIG> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁵² Ministry of Finance of Mongolia and United Nations Environment Programme (2017), *A guideline for sustainable public procurement*, Ulaanbaatar and Paris: Ministry of Finance of Mongolia and UNEP, <http://bit.ly/UnepMN> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁵³ ICLEI (2016), *The Procura + Manual: A Guide to Implementing Sustainable Procurement*, European Sustainable Procurement Network, <http://bit.ly/Procuralclei> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁵⁴ ICLEI (2015), *Manual Procura +: um guia para implementação de compras públicas sustentáveis*, 3rd edn, São Paulo: ICLEI, <http://bit.ly/IcleiPT> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁵⁵ Betiol, L. S., Uehara, T. H. K., Laloe, F. K., Appugliese, G. A., Adeodato, S., Ramos, L. and Neto, M. P. M. et al. (2012), *Compra sustentável: A força do consumo público e empresarial para uma economia verde e inclusiva*, São Paulo: FGV, <http://bit.ly/CompraSustentavel> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁵⁶ Betiol et al. (2015), *Sustainable Procurement: The Power of Public and Private Consumption for an Inclusive Green Economy*, São Paulo: FGV Program for Public Administration and Citizenship, doi:10.13140/RG.2.1.2259.9767.

¹⁵⁷ Governo Federal do Brasil – Advocacia-Geral da União (2020), *Guia nacional de contratações sustentáveis*, 3rd edn, Brasília: AGU, <http://bit.ly/GuiaAGU> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁵⁸ Casier, L., Huizenga, R., Perera, O., Ruete, M. and Turley, L. (2015), *Implementando compras públicas estratégicas em América Latina y el Caribe*, Winnipeg and Geneva: International Institute for Sustainable Development, <http://bit.ly/IISDmanual>, (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁵⁹ Economist Intelligence Unit (2020), *The future of public spending: Why the way we spend is critical to the Sustainable Development Goals*, London, Geneva, New York, Dubai, Hong Kong, Singapore: Economist Intelligence Unit, <http://bit.ly/FutSpending> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁶⁰ One Planet Network (2020), *Sustainable Public Procurement*, <http://bit.ly/OnePlanetSPP> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

¹⁶¹ One Planet Network (2020), *Procura + Africa Sustainable Procurement Network*, <http://bit.ly/ProcuraAfrica> (accessed 30 Oct. 2020).

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Participants in the workshop on sustainable procurement,¹⁶² listed alphabetically by surname:

- **Denize Cavalcanti**, policymaker, Government of the State of São Paulo;
- **Regina Cavini**, officer, UN Environment Programme (UNEP);
- **Kamala Ernest**, officer, UNEP;
- **Mark Hidson**, director, ICLEI's Sustainable Procurement Centre;
- **Alison Hoare**, researcher, Chatham House;
- **Pippa Lockwood**, researcher, Chatham House;
- **Melissa MacEwen**, programme manager, Chatham House;
- **Guillermo Navarro**, officer, FAO Subregional office for Mesoamerica;
- **Marigold Norman**, adviser, Forest Trends Association;
- **Patrick Schröder**, researcher, Chatham House;
- **Tim Stoffel**, researcher, German Development Institute;
- **Sarah Storck**, consultant, FLEGT Independent Market Monitor;
- **Thiago Uehara**, researcher, Chatham House;
- **Mark van Benthem**, director, Probos Foundation;
- **Farid Yaker**, officer, UNEP.

Thiago Uehara designed and conceptualized the research, analysed and interpreted data, proposed the framework, chaired the workshop, wrote and revised the paper. He is guarantor and responsible for any omission or mistake in this work. Alison Hoare critically revised the design and drafts of the paper, co-hosted the workshop, and approved an earlier draft of the paper for submission to the editors. All participants of the workshop contributed ideas that helped to shape the messages and recommendations of this research paper, in particular for Chapter 6.

¹⁶² On 18 June 2020 Chatham House hosted a workshop to discuss the following questions: (1) What should a simple sustainable or smart public procurement framework look like?; (2) What have been the most effective strategies in encouraging smart or sustainable public procurement, particularly in the Global South?; and (3) What recommendations are worth reinforcing to international aid/cooperation and philanthropic organizations, and to organizations in the Global South? The workshop was not held under the Chatham House Rule, and participants have given permission for their contributions to be referenced.

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